

# LETTER,

Written by that famous and faithful  
Minister of Christ

M<sup>r</sup> JOHN LIVINGSTON,

*Unto his Parishoners of*

A N C R A M

*in*

S C O T L A N D,

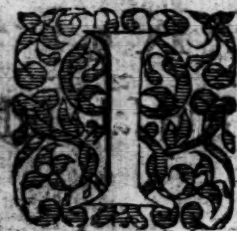
*Dated*

ROTTERDAM October 7. 1671.

# M<sup>R</sup> LIVINGSTON'S

Letter to his Parishioners of *Ancram*.

*W<sup>e</sup>l<sup>o</sup>belov'd in the Lord,*



I cannot excuse my long silence. I have a woful lazie disposition, and indisposition for writing; yea, I judge any thing I write, is scarce worthie that any should look on, or read: besides that my slow and shaking hand is some hinderance to me: Yet when I consider, that I have an account to make for you to the great Shepheard, as having laboured amongst you in the ministrie of this Word some fourteen Years; and now after neerby nine years banishment, age and infirmities creep on, and through a constant pain of the gravel I have much ado once a week, on the Lords Day, to go a very short way to the publick Worship; so as there is no great probability, I can see yo<sup>r</sup> face in this life; and it is most fitting for me, to set my face forward toward my last reckoning. I thought I behoved, in a manner, to make unto you my *Testament*, and open my mind: concerning my self, concerning you, and concerning the present posture of affairs in that *Land*.

And in the entrie, notwithstanding of all the sad things, that have fallen out of late, I would put you in minde of the many good dayes we have seen together, both of Sabbath Dayes and solemne Communion Dayes, wherein we saw the Lords Power and his Grace in his Sanctuary, that in remembrance thereof we may exalt his Name together; and know that though he cause grief, yet he will have compassion, according to the multitude of his Mercies: ye may easily discern: what a difference is between those dayes, and such as ye now see; and what an evil and bitter thing it is, that by our not improving of those dayes, we have provoked him to hide his face, and send such an inundation of matchless Apostacy, Perjurie, Persecution, Profanitie, Atheism; yea Darknesse, Distractions, and Desperancy amongst his own, in all which we may yet expect he is waiting to be gracious, and will be exalted that he may have mercy upon us.

I. For my part, I have peace in regard of these particulars, 1. That not only since my entrie into the Ministrie, but even from my infancy, the Lord was pleased to lead me to an aversion from Prelacy, a stinted Liturgie, the Ceremonies and other Corruptions of that time; and that in my Ministrie, both in *Ireland* and *Scotland*, I joined with those, who were streight in the Cause of God, and testified against these evils: that I joined in the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant, and other parts of the work of

Refor-



Reformation, that was carried on in the Year 1638. and thereafter, as being assured that the Lord did then, does yet, and will ever approve of that work and the prosecution thereof. 2. That I came to *Ancram*, not out of any worldly end, but from a desire to do service to God, and to the Souls of his People; and had thereto the Lords call by your invitation, and the consent and sending of the rightly constituted Church, that then was, both the General Assemblie and Presbytery. 3. That in my Ministrie among you, howbeit I came much short of attainment, my resolution and aime was only to set the Glory of God & good of your Souls before mine eyes; & that it pleased him so to bless my poor weak endeavours, as that sundrie Seals of the Ministrie of his Word were visibly seen, some whereof are already in Glory, and some are wrestling thither. 4. That when I appeared before the Council, at what time I was sentenced with banishment, for refusing to swear the Oath, as they called it, of Alledgeance, and which was indeed the Oath of Supremacy, and did really contain such a Supremacy, as is since fully established; that then I did not, as was propounded by them, take time to advise of mine Answer, which I judged could import my uncleanness in the matter; and that it was not so much out of respect to me, as for that very end propounded; but told plainly, I was fully clear and resolved not to take it. For these and many such singular passages of the Lords gracious guiding me in my Pilgrimage, I desire from my heart to blesse his Glorious Name, and would beg help of all his People to joine with me therein. But 2. I have challenges, beside many others, in respect of these particulars, that all along in my Ministrie, I did not so stir up or improve the gift, that the Lord had given me, nor so carry my self like a Spiritual, Grave. Diligent and Faithful Servant of Christ, as I ought to have done. 2. That in my Ministrie among you, I was not more frequent in visiting Families, and dealing with Persons in particular, to bring them to and keep them in the wayes of God. 3. That when the late grievous defection began in the Year 1661. and 1662. I did not stir up my self and others, whatsoever hazard might have ensued, to appear by Supplications and publick Testimonies, in avowing the Covenant and work of Reformation, which, if it had been done by Church Judicatories, or but singly by Ministers and Professours, in the due season, according to our engagements, might both have glorified God, been a doore of hope for the Posterity, procured more Peace to our own Consciences, yea possibly stopped much of the Defection and Suffering, that hath since ensued. 4. That when I appeared before the Council, I did not take occasion humbly, yet plainly, to remonstrate the guilt of those things, which were publicly enacted, and done against the Prerogative Royal of Jesus Christ, and against his Church and People; and to give warning of the wrath to come on them and the Land, without Repentance; but did content my self with answering what was propounded to me. For these and such other neglects and miscarriages in my life, I would desire to go mourning to the grave, and would intreat for help from you, and others of the Lords People, to seek from Him self pardon, and purifying of both private and publick, both sins of Person and Calling.

## Mr Livingstoun's Letter

II. As for you, I may reckon you all in three Ranks: The first Rank, and I fear the greater number, is of those who; although in general professors of Christianity, yet, so far as could be observed, never laid Religion to heart; and some of these for grosse Ignorance and looseness, were always debarred from the Lords Supper; others although having some knowledge and a civil walk, yet upon good grounds were alwayes suspected to be void of the Love and Fear of God, continuing in their natural unrenewed condition, neglecting the Worship of God in their Families and alone, and shewing by all their carriage that their thoughts and desires never went beyond this World: These, no doubt, are glad of the change now com'd, that they may cast off Christs yoke, and be free of the Word and Discipline, which terrified and tormented them, and may now both swear terrible Oaths, and drinke drunk, which by some will be expounded as a clear evidence of their loyalty: they may now, after the example of many Great ones, walk in the lust of uncleanness, mind nothing but how by any means, just or unjust, to get the World, and then how to spend it on their lusts; and hate, and to their power persecute all, who will not run with them to the same excess of riot. Now as I have often in publick, with as great earnestness and tenderness as I could, warned these to flee from the wrath to come; so I would yet desire them, to stand still a little before they go to the pit, and hear from a truly loving Friend a few words, which I am confident, in the day of the great reckoning shall be found a message from the living God. Do you believe there is a God, or Heaven or Hell? or can ye with all your will and strength scrape the thoughts of these out of your sleeping consciences? Or do ye in such sort hate God, that because ye are his creatures, ye will so far be avenged on your selves, as to sell your selves to his enemy, the Devil, for nought, to be tormented in all eternity? I am most sure, none of you all can be sure that ye are Reprobates; and I can give you assurance, greater than the stability of Heaven and Earth, even the sworn word of him that liveth and reigneth for ever, that if ye will forsake your wicked way, and yet betake your selves to the only Saviour of lost sinners, ye are no Reprobates. O! what advantage have ye, when ye have gained all the World, and all the Pleasures, all the Riches, and all the Favour of it, and have lost your immortal and precious Souls? It is utterly impossible, but that sometimes your own heart tells you, there will be bitterness in the end. Doth not Whoredom and Drunkenness waste the body, take away the Judgment, and leave a sting in the Conscience? Can any avoid the Curse, that goods gotten by falsehood or oppression bring upon the man and all he hath, yea on his Posterity? Is it not sad, that Satan can prompt men to Swear, Curse and Blaspheme, and utter that which he dare not utter himself? And although ye were free of all outward Outbreakings, doth not an unrenewed estate, the neglect of commanded duties, Sabbath-breaking, and such evils, binde you over to the wrath of Him, who is coming there in flaming fire to take vengeance on them, who know not God, and obey not the Gospel? Ye may possibly think, you reso far gone on, that there is no retreat, and the wayes of the Lord are such



*to his Prisoners of Ancram.*

Is your disposition can never agree with; but how can your disposition agree to burn & consume, & never consume in everlasting flames, where each of all your sins shall have the own particular torment? How can ye agree to dwell with Infernal Furies? Or will ye add to all your other wickedness despair, & despising of all the Lords loving, loud and long continued Invitations? What shall you answer, if hereafter the Lord shall say to some of you, I would have given thee both Grace and Glory, if thou hadst but sought it; thou wouldst not give once two or three knocks at my door, thou wouldst not open when I knocked oft and long at thy doors; by so doing thou hast subscribed thine own Reprobation and Condemnation. Oh let me obtain this much of all and every one of you, for all the pains I have taken among you in preaching, for all my Nine yeers banishment from you, for all the prayer I have put up for you, for all the love which he who knoweth all things knoweth I bear to you, ye let your own souls, and the love you have to your own welfare here and hereafter obtain it; or rather let him, who for sinners shed all his most precious blood at *Jerusalem*, obtain this of you, that you will take one day each of you alone from morn to evening for bearing both meat and drink, and go apart rather into some quiet room in an house, or unto some part of the fields, where you may be most quiet, and having before hand marked in the Bible such Places as are fit to be read at such a time, as also having somewhat searched your way toward God; and his wayes toward you, theret set yourselves in his sight, spending the time in Confession of sins, and Prayer for Pardon and grace to serve him, and save your own souls; and if (which is not readily to be supposed) ye get no access on such a day, yet continue thereafter in such exercise and suits; for deliverance from Hell, Enjoying of Heaven and the Favour of God, are worth more pains then ye can take all our Life. Now if this so easie and necessary advice shall be rejected, without prescribing time and place, or measure and manner, but if the main intent of taking some time to humble yourselves before God, and turning unto him be rejected, I take instruments, before Son and Moon and all the Creatures, that I have left this warning, as an indorced summones fixed on the doore of your consciences, to be called and judged before him, who is ready to judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and in his Glory; when beside the witnessing of all your sins, of your own consciences, and of all the Creatures, I also, as your lawful Minister, sent to procure your Reconciliation with God, shall appear to witness that ye got fair warning, but did reject the same, and would needs choose death. Therefore while it is called to day, take a trial of Christs Yoke do but put him to it; and see whether or no he will open the windowes of Heaven, and raine Blessings and Righteousness upon you; come and see, and tast the goodness of the Lord: ye shall be made to say, He is a rich and loving Master; once engage your hearts to him, and ye may desye Satan, and all the allurments and rerours of the World, to draw you from him. Glad would my heart be to hear, before I go to the grave, that some of you have begun a new course, and if ye begin indeed ye will not get it supprest, it will be heard: I shall as I can pray for it, and desire others here to pray for it. It is not needful to multiply words. I leave it with you, as ye shall answer to Jesus Christ, when he shall come

come in the clouds. The *second Rank* is of those, who either had true grace, or seemed to have it; and who went a length beyond others in an orderly walk, and following the Ordinances at home, and abroad; but since the late change have either turned loose and profane, or so far sided with the corruptions of the time, that not one foot-print of their former steadfastness & tenderness doth appear; but they are justly reckoned among those, who will obey whatsoever is commanded by man, although directly opposite to the will of God, revealed in his Word, & to their own lawfully sworn Engagements. These, without Repentance & Amendment, are in a large worse condition than those of the *first Rank*; for their practice proclaimeth that once they brook themselves to Jesus Christ & his wayes, and had some love and respect for him; but now they repent that ever they did so; for they have seen something in him, for which they judge, he is not worthy that they should either do or suffer anything for him. I am much assured, that Satan hath got such entrance in some of those, who once had a profession, and now are declined, that they shall not again be renewed unto repentance, but shall wax worse and worse, having their consciences seared with an here yron. Oh that my fears may be prevented! But I have good confidence that some, who have gone a great length in this course of Apostacy, shall yet, before they go off the World, glorify God by a free and full Confession of their foule fall. Yes, I trust that hundrie of them want not a gnawing sting even all along, but fear of shame before the World, and fear of worldly loss (and oh how small a thing of the World have any of these to have preferred to blessed Jesus Christ!) these hinder hitherto their coming off their dangerous way. Let all, who have declined, and who have not willingly and without choice, to remain in opposition to God, and his righteous wayes, and his afflicted People, let them but compare their present state with what it was before, and answer within their own heart to God, which of the two they allow as best? Ye had encouragement beyond many others, in that the Lord enabled three or foure of that Congregation, and these but boys, cheerfully to endure scourging and banishment, rather then depart from their former Principles and Practices, and most of these are now in a better outward condition, than before: these shall be witnesses against you, if ye do not in time betake yourselves avowedly to your former profession. I have yet by me the Subscriptions to the Covenant of all the men; that were of the Congregation. Not only that Paper, but the hands of all both men and women, which, in swearing the Covenant, after reading the Solemn Acknowledgement of sins and Engagement to duties, were lifted up to God; these hands, because they will endure for ever, shall be everlasting witnesses either for you, or against you. Ye got warning that such trials would come, as have since ensued, and seemed to be fortified against them: Remember the speech I had to you, the Monday after the last Communion, wherein, presaging what would shortly follow, I in a manner bid you farewell: ye seemed then to be somewhat moved, and to resolve on all hazards to abide by the Cause of God; ye seemed to run well, who or what hath hindered you, that ye should not obey the truth? It may be there are few or none in all the Land, who in all points have kept their Covenant to God, but have neglected some opportunities of their duties; and the good

*to his Parishioners of Anctam.*

77

good Lord will pardon such, as see the plague of their own heart, & turne to him: but to joine in the course of defection with those, who have abjured that Covenant to countenance an intruded Hireling, and joine with him in that which they call Worship, yea to sit and drink with him: who was lawfully and deservedly excommunicated by the Church of Scotland; to keep Holy Dayes appointed by men; to withdraw from the fellowship and meetings of those, who in some degree continue in their integrity; these are such gross and direct violations of the Oath of God, as can proceed from nothing but a fearful deserting of God; from a preferring the will of man, to the will of the living God, and preferring the ease and petty pelf of the world to the Salvation of your immortal souls. I am fully sure, ye dare not say before the Lord, that although all fear of inconvenience from man were quite taken away, yet conscience of obeying the will of God would make you do, as now ye do. If ye were sure within ten dayes by death to turn your back on all, would ye not think it fitting, that both God and the world saw a change on you, from your present way? and ye have no assurance of one day. Think often on Christs Word, that *who deny him before men, he will deny them before his Father*. It is impossible, it is utterly impossible, to be a Disciple of Jesus Christ, or an heir of glory, without a Resolution to quite all, even Life itself, for his sake, when called to it. I am much affrayed, when the conscience of some of you shall waken, that ye shall hardly be kepted from some degrees of despair. Come off, come off in time, be not affrayed or ashamed to witness against yourselves, and the wicked course of the time; give Glory to God: get peace to your own consciences, strengthen the hands, and make glad the hearts of those, that are seeking God; ye know not but if ye delay, your wakening may come after the door is shut, and that then shall be no times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. As for the poor wretch, that is thrust in upon you, do not hate him; do not injure him, rather pray for him, and he means, if it be possible, that he may recover; but do not countenance or joine with him; ye may easily be sensible, he is not a messenger from the Lord, for your spiritual good, but a snare and hardener of you in unwarranted wayes. I may by good ground from the Word of God affirm, that unless a gracious change be wrought in both he and all that follow him shall perish Eternally. Now the Lord himself, who only can do it, open your eyes to see the danger of your way, urge and enable you to take some time to mourn before him in secret, and openly to testify, as occasion offers, before good and evil, that ye are returned to your former Profession; then shall none of all your Transgressions be mentioned unto you.

The Third Rank is the little handful of those, who in such an evil time have laboured to keep their garments clean, to whom it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer, or at least expose themselves to suffering for his sake: ye have great cause to bless the Lord, & I and many others will joine with you, to bless his holy name, that howbeit ye have but a little strength, ye desire to keep his word, and not deny his name; ye have found and will finde yet more, that Christ will not be behinde with you, nor sleep in your debt. I trust your consolations abound, far beyond your fears or dangers or sufferings, your hundred fold is going to the fore for you and yours, in the Bank of Heaven

of Heaven, when more than an hundred is the interest for one. Christ was once owned as King of his Church, in that Land, that in Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government, his Lawes in his Word should be the only Rules; and herunto all from the highest to the lowest had by Oath engaged themselves; now abjured Prelacy is brought in, Christs faithful servants cast out, hirelings thrust in in his house, the whole disposing of Church Matters, Persons and Meetings by the Act of Supremacy, referred to the sole arbitrement of a mortal Creature, & Persecution bended against all, who go not alongs in that Apostacy & Perjury: & is not then suffering rated on as important a quarrel, as ever was since the foundation of the world; the smallest point of Christs Prerogative royal, is not only worth the sufferings; but worth more than the Eternal Salvation of all the Elect. Be not afraid but he, who sits crowned King on mount Zion, knows well how to right himself: not onl a touch of the iron rod in his hand, or the sword that cometh out of his mouth, but a frown or wink of his eye, can dash in pieces all the postheards of the Earth: He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed; this cloud of Opposition to his worke will be scattered, as many others have been before. He is only taking a trial, what will be every mans part; and not only the malice of Enemies, but the weakness of some of his own will be discovered. He will suffer the Opposers of his worke to sport themselves a little, as if they had don their work, & rooted out both truth and godliness; & he will have his own brought to a necessity both of more vigorous faith depending cleaply & close on himself and his word, and more deep humiliation, serious repentance and amendement: but he hath his set time, when he will awake as a mighty man; & I hope, build his Palace in that Land, with the addition of more glory, than ever was before. As for you, I would advertise you of two or three things. 1. It is not enough to be steadfast in the present controversy, ye must study to be Holy in all manner of conversation, and shine as lights, blameless and harmless, the Sons of God, without rebuke in the mids of a crooked and perverse nation; an idol entertained in the heart, or a blemish in the life will make a fearful discovery of unfoundnes in the end: let the love and fear of God be made evident to all onlookers, in all your carriage; so shall ye go neer to convince even Adversaries of the reality of your Religion. 2. Consider, this barrel is not at an end, ye have not resisted unto blood, ye know not what trials may abide you, keep on your armour, strengthen your resolution to deny yourselves, and all ye have, for his sake; dwell neer to and be alwayes in good terms with the Captain of Salvation; and be not afraid but ye shall be furnished abundantly what to say, what to do, and how to endure. 3. If the Lord, for such fearful Apostacy, and Breach of Covenant, shall besides the dreadful spiritual Judgements already poured out, send any common Calamity in that Land, as Sword, Pest or Famine, I would pray and hope, that ye may be hid; but if any of these strokes shall reach any of you, do not grudge, your sins might procure more; it is much if ye get your souls for a prey. 4. Keep up your meetings for prayer and mutual upstirring, cry mightily to God, each of you apart; so shall not your meetings be flat or formal: a few wrestlers may help to keep God in the Land, he is not willing to depart, if any will but hold him. Seek repentance to the Land and yourselves, stability to those that stand,

recovery



recovery to such as have sidden or fallen: let me have some little share in your prayers, that I may finish my course with joy, and still bring forth fruit in old age. Seek from the Lord right Zeal, Wisdom and Tenderness, to deal with any of your neighbours, that ever appeared for him, & now have declined: if ye prevail with any of them, admit them to your meetings. Even the Lord give you understanding in all things.

III. Now as concerning the Condition of the Church, and Work of God in that Land, ye remember, that although I shuned not, according to my poor measure, and as occasion offered, and necessity required: to shew my minde of publick Matters, Dangers and Duties of the time; yet I used not to insist very much in such things, as not being much inclined or able for disputing; and having found by frequent experience, that so soon as any were gained to close indeed with Christ, and lay Religion to heart in earnest, these generally out of a native principle became presently found in the controversies of the time. And in the present case, several things would rather seem to perswade silence, because indeed our present Condition ought rather to be matter of lamentation and mourning before the Lord, day and night, alone and in company, then matter of discourse amongst ourselves; and because it is very hard to use freedom, and not displease some, whom a man would be very unwilling to offend; and because of all men living, I have least reason to think, that I would offer my light as a rule of any other mans light. But when I consider that as one (although most unworthie, yet) intrusted by Jesus Christ, as an Ambassadour from him to his people, I am shortly to give account before him of my negotiation, I cannot decline what light, I judge, I have from him out of his word, anent present affairs, to open the same to you, as in his sight, in as great simplicity and ingenuity, as I can.

And First, I need not insist to declare, that notwithstanding of all, that hath fallen out of late, and all the Objections against the Work of Reformation, all which were both propounded and answered above 30. years ago, that yet both I & all that Land, & the posterity after us stand bound before the Lord, to adhere to the National Covenant, the Solemn League and Covenant, and all the parts and degrees of Reformation and Uniformity, which we had attained: neither will I conceal, that howbeit thereafter I withdrew from the meetings of the Protesters, when I perceived the matter like to tend to a staled Schisme, that yet after as narrow search, as I could make, I have no Challenges, but rather Approbation, that in the beginning I joined in the Protestation, against the courses taken in the year 1651. and thereafter, for bringing in the Malignant Enemies of the Work of God, to Counsels and Command. I am not willing to rake in such ashes (Oh if the fire were extinguished and forgotten!) and I know that some good men, in a day of great darkness and distress, did what they conceived for the time dutie; yet when I consider our former engagements to the contrair, and that the principles and motives of these courses would necessarily recoil against former endeavours of purging the army; & against the Opposition made to the unlawful Engagement in the year 1648. yea against the Solemn League and Covenant; and by consequence against

the late work of Reformation, yea against the first Reformation from Popery; and that the bulk of the disaffected Ministers of the Land, some whereof, although born down, might have been observed in every General Assembly, even from the year 1638. that these did natively joyn to make up the party, I judge these courses to have been no small step of the defection of the Church. I could have wished indeed, that more moderation, & more real endeavours for union in the Lord, had been used on both sides; but I was also convinced, that the late sad change was in some respect seasonably sent from the Lord, that faithfull Ministers and Professours should rather suffer by the Prelats, and such as by overturning the Work of God, brought them in, than by Judicatours of the Church, which in all appearance would shortly have followed; yea in some places was already begun: And it is most sad, that when time hath brought to light the necessary consequence of these courses, yet few or none of these have testified any resentment thereof. Beside clear Demonstrations of the Efficacy of the Gospel, in converting and confirming sinners, which hath been as conspicuous in the Church of *Scotland*, as in any of the Reformed Churches, the Lord was pleased from the beginning to put in the hand of his Servants, in that Land, a piece of Service, not so directly called for at the hands of some others of the Churches, to wit, as Christ's Prophetical & Priestly Office had been debated, suffered for and cleared; so they should stand and contend for his Kingly Office; that he is not only inwardly a Spiritual Head to his Mystical Church; but externally a Spiritual Politick Head to the Politick Body of the visible Church of Professours, & their only Law-giver; to invest them with intrinsick power to meet for his Worship; and their Officers appointed by him, to meet for Discipline & Ordering the affairs of his house; that no Ceremonie or Invention of man, that want his stamp, is to be brought into his Worship; no Officer to be brought into his house, but such as he hath appointed in his Word; & although his servants, & people are to carry towards Gods Ordinance of Magistracy, where they live, as any other Subjects, & to deny them no respect or obedience, due to them, yet in their Meetings & Administrations they are not subordinat unto or dependant on any Civil power. These and such others were the points asserted, and suffered for by the renowned worthies of this Church, by *Mr Knox*, *Mr Welsh*, *Mr Bruce* and many others, who now shine in glory. And although there have been in former times, several sad dayes of the defection of Ministers, as in the year 1584 and at other times, yet because there never was such a black houre and power of darkness, as is now fallen upon us, I shall in the second place touch some particulars, for which I judge ye, and I, and many others have reason most bitterly to mourn before the Lord. 1. That in the beginning of this grievous defection, such a base cowardise fell generally on all, that not one Testimony from any Church Judicatory in *Scotland*, was given to the cause of God, and against the horrid violation of a sworn Covenant; yea some as industriously stopped Testimonies, as if they had been hired so to do; some whereof pretending, it was not a fit time, when a most fit time came, and being

being urged thereto by Authority, yet declined it. It was first and last the guilt of those, who had the conviction on them, to neglect the duty, for want of the concurrence of others. True Zeal for the honour of our Master, or remembrance of our reckoning before him, would have stirred us up to another sort of boldness: we would not have been so blunt in our own concernment: the sight of the Fathers danger brake the tack of a Son's tongue, who was tongue-tacked from the birth. The Lord indeed provided a real Testimony from some, who had and have yet of their bones witnessing before the sun. But oh that we did not adventure somewhat for his glory, for our own peace, for the good of Posterity, yea for the true good and edifying even of our Opposites! We ought not only to be deeply humbled, and deal much and long for pardon of such an Omissions but earnestly seek grace and strength to take hold of any opportunity for repairing such a loss. 2. That some of those Ministers, who were laid aside by Authority, did in a manner lay themselves aside, as if they had been exonerated of all Charge; whereas such as have any liberty of a Subject, and feet and tongue loose, ought rather be instant in season and out of season, and from house to house instruct and warn young and old both of former Charge, and every where, as occasion offers: It is true, none are now Apostles, but Ministers have the same charge, that Apostles had, to feed the Flock of Christ, and are given primarily not to any particular Charge, but to the Universal visible Church: few of the Apostles, or Apostolick Men, had either such Churches and Pulpits to preach in, or a settled maintenance. Love to Christ, and love to the souls of People, that are perishing in ignorance and disobedience, would banish the love of ease, and the fear of danger, and the idol of carnal prudence. That however a man, for maintenance of himself, and his family, might practise medicine, or labour land, or betake himself to any other employment; yet he is to remember the ministrie is his main employment, and that at his admission he engaged before God to be diligent and faithful therein. Some have preached out of prison windowes; some have converted their keepers: It were to be wished, that a Minister in all places, in all company, at all times, were about somewhat of his Masters work; so shall he hear at last, well done good and faithful servant. Let us deal with the Lord, that he will deal with the hearts of all his Servants, and thrust them out into his harvest; as I hope some, who seemed to be somewhat deficient in that duty, are already begun to bestir themselves; and others, upon sight of the courses of the time, and the peoples necessity and willingness to hear, will do yet more abundantly.

3. That after the destroyers of the Lords heritage, had razed the work of Reformation to the foundation, and had not only invaded the rights that he hath allowed this Servants, in the Government of his house, but, as far as creatures can do, usurped his own Prerogative Royal; and not at all hiding the snare, but by the letter to the Council, and the Councils Act opening the designe, to have the Ministrie of the Word wholly dependant on the Civil Power and Supremacy; that yet some Ministers accepted that, which they called an Indulgence of their Ministrie, without any publick testimony,

either of their adherence to the Oath of God and work of Reformation, or against these Usurpations. Oh for a head turned into waters, & eyes a fountain of tears, to deplore day & night such an indignity, done to the Son of God, without a witness; and such shame cast upon the Church of Scotland. Our Fathers for far less matters contested with the Powers of the earth, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with us; and do we think that our Lord and Master is not able to maintain his own cause? I have great charity for most of the men, who I suppose may have a sting in the bosome, for neglect of the opportunity. A *Peter* & a *Barnabas* may be carried away at a time to and by a dissimulation: the credit of the Ministrie ought to be dear to us, but the credite of our Master and His interests ought to be dearer then all things else. The Ministrie of the Gospel is indeed a great benefite, but nothing hinders why the Ministrie of the Gospel might not have been had, and may not yet be had without a Pulpit and a Stipend: It is an ill made bargain, where the one party gets clear gain, the keyes of Christs house in a manner delivered up to them; and the other is uncertain if God will bless a Ministrie, purchased at such a rate. If any Ministers have had a hand in contriving or procuring that Indulgence, I suppose, they have done more mischief to the poor Church of Christ in that Land, then all the Prelats, and all their Hirelings; and if such an Indulgence should be offered to, and accepted by all the outed Ministers of the Land, without a publick testimony; I would look upon it as the most dreadful presage, that yet hath appeared, of the Lords totale forsaking of the Land, It is not now Episcopacy and Ceremonies, that is the Controversie; but whether Jesus Christ be King of his own Church, which He hath bought with His Blood; or if the Leviathan of the Supremacy shall swallow up all, to which it is all alike whether it have Prelats or Presbyters subservient unto it, onely it must rule according to its own arbitrement without control, and bring forth yet more and more fruits of all impiety and profanity. A Minister, that can preach truths, which no man question, & miskens this grand controversie; or speaks of it so darkly, as that he discovers he desires not to be understood; I durst not say, that in that he is a faithful Ambassadour of Jesus Christ. Sure, if his own reputation were touched, he would speake in a more picquant manner; and his Masters honour should be above his own repute. A bare not-agreeing to the Accommodation propounded is not a sufficient evidence of faithfulness, at such a time. Sathan counts no great gain of the Prelats, nor them that set them up, nor them that follow them; but outed Ministers and noted Professours would be a great prize to him: and I am sure, winnow as hard as he can, he shall get none that belong unto Christ. O how sad is it that some to please men, and those the overturners of all the work of God, have laid aside that useful part of Reformation and Uniformity, the expounding of the Scripture, formerly practised to so much edification, & others make it so, as it were as good to forbeare it. The excuse of the short dayes of winter, or the weakness of ones body, may well allow a man to make both the Lecture & the Preaching shorter, but on such a pretext to lay it aside, especially, being in some sort  
a case



a case of confession, I fear shall not be allowed before the righteous Judge. If it be said, better have preaching without Lecturing, nor no preaching at all. True, if there be a Physical impediment in the way of lecturing, or if all preaching had been by the Lord allotted to such a pulpit by the indulgence of such a creature; but when men come to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they may bring us into bondage, and would inure us to take one of their burdens after another, we ought not to give place by subjection, no not for an hour; for by such arguing, better have preaching without ever citing *Isaiah*, nor none; better without mentioning the decree of election, or imputed righteousness, nor none at all. Alas! the Lord hath poured on us the Spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed our eyes, our Prophets and our Rulers, the Seers hath he covered. O what a deep wound was it to my heart, to hear of a Minister, who I think certainly hath both true grace and rare gifts, that he so far complied with the course of the time, as to keep a holy Day, appointed by men, and drink about the Bone-fires! what will be the end of those things? What, when God shall waken the Conscience? Our Ministers were our Glory, and I fear our Idol, and the Lord hath stained the pride of our glory. None of us who are here, and seem to be dissatisfied with some things at home, want conviction of our own grievous miscarriages; and it is probable that if we had been at home, we might have done worse than any others. If it were possible, I would desire so to speake for Christ and his interest, as not to reflect on any Person, but *Levi's* duties and blessing lies otherways. I professe to you, although I have a real excuse of my inability to debate and argue, without which the propounding of ones minde seemes too Dictator like, that yet I have apprehension, that my not writing to some friends, makes the guilt of somethings done or omitted more mine, than theirs. Oh for the day, when all of us, whether together or apart, without reflecting on any but ourselves, might mourn the mourning of *Hadrimmon*, in the Valley of *Megiddon*, I should look on that, as Scotland's great delivery: yea it is to be most earnestly sought from the Lord, and endeavoured, that the whole bulk of the people, and even those who have carried on the defection, might get repentance; so should we be a greater wonder to the world of his matchless mercy, nor now we are of sudden and shameful Apostacy: and many such wonders he can work; if he please, and we may suppose will work, if there were wrestlers for such a blessing, but that also is his own gift: to him be all glory for ever.

In the close, it will be expected that I give you all some directions, how to walk in such a time; and as they come in my mind, I shall set them down. 1. In all things, and above all things, let the Word of God be your only Rule. Christ Jesus your only hope, His Spirit your only Guide, and His Glory your only End. 2. See that each of you apart Worship God every day, morning & evening, at least; read some of His Word, and call on Him by prayer, and give Him thanks, if ye be straitened with business, it is not so much the length of your Prayer that he regards, as the Uprightness & the Earnestness of the heart; but neglect not the duties, and if ye be without the hearing of others, utter your voice, it is

sometime a great help, but do it not to be heard of others; sing also a Psalm, or some part of a Psalm; ye may learne some by heart for that purpose.

3. Through the whole day labour to set the Lord alwayes before you, as present to observe you, and strengthen you for every duie, and then look over how the day hath been spent, before ye sleep.

4. Such as have Families set up the Worship of God in your Families, as ye would avoid the wrath, that shall be poured on the Families that call not on his name.

5. As occasion offers of any honest Minister coming alongs, neglect not the same; and on the Lords Day, go where ye can hear the Word sincerely preached by a sent Minister, who will witness against the evils of the time, without which, I apprehend, whatever a mans gifts be, the Lord will not send the blessing. *Oxnard* is not far off, and I hope *Mr Scot* doth, and will declare for the sworn Reformation, and testify against the present defection; but I dar not bid you hear any of the intruded Hirelings, whom they call Curats. I know some good men have heard, or do hear some of them, but I believe, if all fear of inconvenience were removed, they would do other wayes. If no occasion of a publick meeting be, or if ye cannot go to it, sanctifie the Lords Day in your Families, or at least each of you in your own heart.

6. Give no occasion to the World to say, that ye neglect your Calling, or are busie bodies in other mens matters, or have any doubleness in your worldly dealings, a faithful carriage free of covetousness is a great ornament to the profession.

7. Have a care of your Children that they be taught to read, and have Bibles so soon as they can use them, and take them with you to hear the Word preached, and instruct them your selves the more diligently, that publick means are scarce.

8. Such as have any leasure, read some good Books, whereby ye may profire in knowledge and affection: read now and then the Covenants, the Confession of Faith, and the longer Catechisme, and the little Treatise printed with them. I would recommend to you the writings of *Mr Durham*, and *Mr Binning*, and *Mr William Gutrie*, and *Mr Andrew Gray*, especially *Mr Rutherford's* Letters, (I hope shortly ye shall be supplied with some more Copies of them) as also any good pieces from England, as *Mr Allen*, or the like: I dar not recommend *Baxter* to you, he is a dangerous Man: let *Chasters* and *Strandhill* buy some such as they oan, and lend them to others to be read.

9. Any thoughts ye have of the business of the time, examine them well by the word, and present them oft to God by prayer; and what ye get so confirmed, be not easily moved therefrom, although some Ministers should be of a contrair opinion; for in those dayes fundrie of the common People have clearer light and steadier practice, than some Ministers; but be not proud, or self willed in your own opinion.

10. By any means see that ye be not drawn to a contempt of the Ministrie, or Ministers in whom any thing of God really appeareth, although some might have sliden in an houre of temptations; but study all lawful wayes of union and healing, yet so as ye approve nothing, which the word and your conscience condemne.

11. Strengthen your selves in the main grounds of Religion against Popery, and read some short treatises for that purpose; ye know not but it may be a great part of the trial of the time.

12. Some Ministers have begun of late to question Christs imputed righteousness, look upon these, whatever shew they may make of moderation and accuracy,

curat walking, as enemies to Jesus Christ, and the salvation of souls. 13. Keep you far, very far, from this last device of Satan, Quakerism, which, under colour of sobriety and patience, overthrows all the grounds of Christian Religion; and indeed they should not be looked on as Christians; themselves and the light within them, which is also in all Pagans, is all their Saviour: converse not with them: as much as ye can, avoid conference with them; the evil Spirit that is in them desires no better, nor continual wrangling: many are much mistaken if there be not much Devilry among them, as some com'd off from them have testified. 14. I know the course ceaseth now that was taken, for providing the poore with meat, but after your ability send part some of your means for the poore; I mean not the sturdie Vagabonds, but poor Housholders, especially those that have any good in them. 15. Deal in all earnestness and love with any of your Neighbours, whom ye perceive in a way that will destroy their souls: visite your Neighbours in their sickness, and drop something for their souls good. 16. Let such as have been Elders, and have not run the wicked course of the time, know that their obligation ceaseth not, but rather is increased to visite and oversee the Flock, and warn and comfort, as occasion requires. 17. Forget not Christs Command to love your Enemies, and pray for them that persecute you: many a time our carnal anger and bitterness puts on a disguise, as if it were zeal; true love to God and our Neighbour would prompt us to many duties, that now are forgot, and to a better way of doing duties, and yet keep us from being partakers of other mens sins. 18. Guard your hearts from a carnal disposition, in speaking or hearing of the miscarriages of others, and let not that be all the matter of your discourse, howbeit it may be part; but there is more edifying to be speaking of what is good. 19. I hear there is a rare work of grace begun of late in some, not far from you, in the borders of Northumberland, I judge it were for your advantage if some of you, such as are able, went thither to be acquainted with them: your Friend *Henry Hall* would easily make your acquaintance: their fire edge might help to kindle up old siten-up professors; yea if some of you who are yet graceless would go & see their way, they might be suited with that blessed disease.

I fear ye shall hardly read my hand, and yet it hath taken neerby as many dayes to write, as there are pages, but it was not fitting to make use of any others hand.

Let this Letter be read to all of the Parish, who will be willing to hear it; and to any that are gon out of it, as *Andrew Burkholme* and *Margaret Walker*, or any that used ordinarily to meet with us, as *Mrs Eltor*, *Isabel Simpson*, and such others. I know there is a great change, since I left you, by the death of some, and coming in of others but I am sometime refreshed to look over the roll of the Parish, as it was when I left you. Desire from me *Mr Henry* and *Mr William Erskine*, or any other of that sort, to come now and then to visite and water you. I could wish that when ye hear of any honest Merchant in *Edinburgh*, or any other coming hither, some of you would give them a particular account of both good and evil, to bring to me; I had a little account lately from *John Torsha*, that made me both joyful and sad; I shall write when any of my Sons are to come over, that if they can, they will come to you, a day or two, and bring

36 Mr Livingstone's Letter to his Prisoners of Ancram.  
bring me information how it is with you. Now as I am at this distance, I em-  
brace you all, and all that used to join with us at our Communion: I salute you  
all, I bless you all, I commend you all to God and the Word of his Grace,  
which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them  
which are sanctified: The rich and powerful Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ  
be with you all. Thus witheth.

Your loving and lawful Pastor

Reminds 7. October 1671.

JOHN LIVINGSTONE





